

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Nancy Bowden; I am a resident of Bloomfield and a member of Make the Road CT.

I stand in support of **HB 6616**: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

I am a retired worker who receives Medicare and Social Security benefits. I have never had to experience a gap in my healthcare insurance. Having had this protection all my life is the reason I care about HUSKY coverage being extended to all those who qualify, regardless of immigration status. I have had a number of opportunities over the past five years to witness the brokenness of our immigration "system", as well as to meet several families that are being affected by our arcane rules even as they continue to work hard every day and struggle to maintain safe, healthy and positive community environments for their families. It is time to lift up their contributions to our communities and the State of Connecticut by providing resources for their basic human needs, in this case for healthcare.

No one in my extended family has had to suffer from a lack of access to healthcare. Sadly, I know the same is not true for many families, including a disproportional segment of the immigrant community. Many of those who work to provide financial security are in jobs with no healthcare benefits; in addition, if their children are sick, they may have to take time off that can result in lost wages or even in lost employment. I am quite sure that many serious health conditions thus are left to get worse than they would have had treatment been available earlier. The stress from fear of a serious illness or injury is an additional burden on people who perform so many essential functions in our economy. This point was driven into the open by the COVID pandemic, but the problem predates COVID and will continue beyond our current health crisis if we don't address it now.

I started my professional work life in the insurance industry, among the ranks of actuaries for life, health and pension businesses. I know the value not only of early treatment but also of preventive care, including annual physicals and other true "wellness" practices. Extending HUSKY coverage to all individuals regardless of immigration status will have significant "payback" in terms of fewer lost days of work and school, lower community transmission of contagious disease, fewer emergency room visits and growth in Connecticut's reputation as a good place to live and thrive, no matter who you are. I urge you to bring this bill forward for the 2023 legislative session. Thank you.

I support **HB 6616** and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Nancy Bowden